



April 19, 2022

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**Situation 1:** With R1 on second base and no outs, B2 hits a deep fly ball between F8 and F9 that should score R1 easily. As R1 approaches third base, they are obstructed by F5 who is blocking the base. R1 runs around F5 and while doing so fails to touch third base. They continue on and touch home plate as the ball is returned to F6 at second base. F5 asks for and is granted time, they then appeal that R1 missed third base. The umpire agrees but states that an obstructed runner cannot be called out for missing a base where they were obstructed and allows R1's run to score. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. NFHS softball rule 8-4-3b clearly states that obstructed runners are still required to touch all bases in proper order, or they could be called out if properly appealed. Although NFHS Softball rules protect an obstructed runner between the two bases where they were obstructed, and also protects them until they reach the base that they would have reached had there been no obstruction, there are exceptions to this protection. These exceptions are listed in rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES 1 EXCEPTIONS. The intent of the obstruction rule is to remove the negative impact that a fielder caused a runner when they obstructed their progress. This is accomplished by awarding the obstructed runner the base or bases they would have reached had there been no obstruction. However, the rules are not intended to allow the obstructed runner to violate any playing rules. All bases must still be legally touched, they cannot commit interference or pass another runner as examples. Even if F5 is blocking the base, R1 is still able to touch the base. Yes, if a player is blocking the base it may take more time for a runner to find a way to touch the base, but that extra time factors into the umpires judgement of what base that runner would have obtained had there not been obstruction. Again, the rule as written allows the obstructed runner to be awarded the base that they would have reached had there been no obstruction so any negative impact on the runner is "erased" by ensuring they reach the base they would have reached in the umpires judgment had there been no obstruction. (8-4-3b)

**Situation 2:** Team A is at bat with no runners on, B1 hits a deep line drive that gets past F9 and goes to the fence. B1 continues on to third base as the throw comes in and gets past F5 accidentally hitting Team A's third base coach and ricocheting away from F7 who was in position to make a play on the overthrown ball. In (a) the coach is in the coach's box. In (b) the coach is outside of the coach's box. **RULING:** In (a) there is no violation since the coach was in the coach's box and did not intentionally interfere with the thrown ball or interfere with the defensive team's opportunity to make a play on another runner. In (b) if the umpire judges the coach interfered with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play, then the ball is dead and the runner closest to home is ruled out. **NOTE:** As described in Rule 2-13, coaches are only restricted to the coach's box until the pitch is released. However, there are different rules covering the coach's actions if they are in or out of the coach's box during play. Rule 8-6-16b covers situations as described in part (a) above where the coach is in the coach's box when they are contacted with a thrown ball. The coach's box is not a safe haven where the coach is free to do anything they wish, but it is designed to be a place where the coach can perform their duties while in live ball

territory. With that in mind rule 8-6-16b provides a little more “protection”, for lack of a better term, to the coach when they are within the coach’s box during play. As the rule describes, if the coach is in the coach’s box, they have to intentionally interfere with a thrown ball for interference to be ruled. This is different if they have chosen to position themselves outside of the coach’s box. If a coach is not within the coach’s box when they are contacted with the thrown ball, part b of rule 8-6-16 would not apply and there would no longer have to be intent to have interference ruled. Rule 8-6-16 would apply in this case and if their actions, intentional or not, interfered with a defensive player’s opportunity to make a play then interference should be ruled. (8-6-16)

**Situation 3:** In (a) with bases loaded B4 hits an over the fence home run. R3 in their excitement missed second base on their way around the bases. R2 misses third base and the coach grabs them directing them back to properly touch third base. In (b) with R1 on second base and R2 on first base, B3 hits a ground ball to F6 who fields the ball and their throw to first base goes out of play. R1 is awarded home, R2 is awarded third base and B3 is awarded second base. As R2 is heading to third base they cut across the infield and do not touch second base. In both cases, the umpire rules that since the ball was dead when the infractions occurred that no outs are recorded. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Runners must legally run the bases, even awarded bases. In (a) although the ball is dead once it clears the home run fence in flight, the runners are still required to legally run the bases. When the third base coach physically assisted R2 the umpire should have ruled them out but allowed the other runners to complete their base running obligations. If the defense properly appealed R3 missing second base they should be ruled out. In (b) the ball becomes dead when it enters dead ball territory, but runners are still required to legally run their awarded bases. If the defense properly appealed R2 missing second base, they would be ruled out. (2-1-7, 5-2-2c, 8-3-11, 2022 POE Assisting a runner page 86)